

# Francis X. Beytagh: An Appreciation

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It is a privilege to write in honor of Frank Beytagh's memory as he, and the building he brought to life, played a significant part in my decision to join the Moritz faculty in 1992 as director of the Moritz Law Library.<sup>1</sup> At that time, Frank was in the seventh year of his deanship and the law building expansion (which, nearly a quarter-century on, I still think of as the "new" building) was well on its way to completion. I first met Frank several years earlier and saw that, in addition to his staunch support of law libraries, he had a well-conceived vision of enabling the College of Law to continue its move forward in the ranks of American legal education. A central element of this vision was building on the work of his predecessors in hiring and retaining a first-tier faculty and enrolling strong classes of law students. Doing that, however, required a dramatic improvement of the physical space occupied by the college and law library. Ideally, there would be an entirely new building, but at the very least, the existing building needed significant expansion and renovation. This proved to be a complex and often daunting project. Fortunately for the college, and all of us who have been a part of its community, we had in Frank a dean with the intellectual power, the political savvy, and the stubborn determination to pull it off.

The building Frank inherited in 1985 had opened in stages between 1956 and 1959 and was dedicated in 1960. It was (and still is) a mid-century modernist building rather lacking in that style's flare. Nonetheless, it had served the College of Law well for the first twenty-five years after the move from Page Hall. By the mid-1980s, however, it was evident that the building had been overtaken by time and change. There were twice as many faculty and students as when the building first opened, and many more of those students were women. The Planning Committee noted in the 1987 *Space Needs Assessment* that the restrooms and lounges were inadequate for women and for men.<sup>2</sup> The college had been in the forefront of clinical legal education since the 1930s, yet the space allotted to the clinics, which had grown in number, was, in the words of the Assessment, "entirely inadequate and obsolete."<sup>3</sup> The *Ohio State Law Journal* and the new *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* were poorly housed, and there was minimal room for other student

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<sup>1</sup> I confess to the sin of anachronism as three of the names I will use occasionally in this piece were not bestowed until after Frank's deanship. The law library was named for Michael Moritz '61 in 1998, and the College of Law was named for him in 2001. The college's building remained nameless from 1960 until 1995 when it was named for John Deaver Drinko '44, who rallied to Frank's support in contributing and raising funds for the new building.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Fink, Planning Comm. Chair, Tentative Final Draft of Space Needs Assessment for Building Addition 3 (Apr. 6, 1987) (unpublished document) (on file with author).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 5–6.

organizations. There was no space for new programs of any sort. The classrooms, albeit still functional, were dated and not sized or configured properly for the curriculum. The college's administrative staff, while still small, was significantly larger than it had been in 1960.

The law library, which occupied the center of the building, was bursting at the seams. The stack block shelves were full and, although a compact storage system had been installed, it was enough for only five additional years of growth. Although the number of librarians and staff had grown over the years, the design of the library did not accommodate this growth well. The Reading Room, the public heart of the library and the primary seating area, was crowded at the best of times and jammed during exams. Furthermore, the building, constructed long before the advent of personal computers, did not easily support the well-established, indispensable use of computers.

This then was Frank's challenge: the building was full and not well designed for the demands of legal education in the late twentieth century, much less the rapidly approaching twenty-first. Added to this was the not-so-surprising fact that any meaningful remedy would be very expensive. Frank did many things to meet this challenge, three of which I want to highlight. First, he assembled a Planning Committee and appointed Professor Howard Fink, a senior member of the faculty, as chair. This committee, joined in 1987 by the late Professor Alan Holoch, the incoming director of the Moritz Law Library, was a central part of the project as it evolved from concept, to design, to construction, to furnishing.

Next, Frank impressed upon the university the importance of hiring an exceptional architect to design what was now to be a very large addition to the existing building. This led to the appointment of Gunnar Birkerts as design architect for the project. Birkerts had already made his name in legal education circles by designing the underground addition to the University of Michigan's law library and the new law school building at the University of Iowa. He had the virtues of being a renowned and talented architect with experience working with law schools.

Finally, Frank raised money—a lot of money. The estimated cost of the project was nearly \$15 million, at least half of which had to come from private donations. Frank tirelessly worked to secure significant gifts from alumni, law firms, and foundations to make this building possible. He also expended much time, and much of his political capital, securing funding from the larger university and the state of Ohio.

The end result of Frank's extraordinary work was a magnificent addition to the building, a primary beneficiary of which was the law library. With Frank's vigorous support, two-thirds of the space in the new addition was allocated to the law library. This enabled a superb library to finally occupy an equally superb space. For the past twenty-four years, it has given students, staff, and faculty a very comfortable space to learn and work. It is a space that has been large and flexible enough to accommodate the ongoing changes in the library's collection and services since 1992.

Did Frank accomplish everything he hoped to do with the college's building? Of course not. The cost and logistics of constructing an entirely new building on the central campus were prohibitive. Thus, the 1950s building, with many welcome subsequent renovations, is still very much with us. At a more personal level for Frank, he lost what I call the "battle of the clock." He had argued for a large clock, symbolizing the movement of time from the founding of the college onwards, to be placed over the entrance. It would be funded with the portion of the project budget allocated to public art. Alas, it was not to be. A university committee controlled that decision and so, instead of a clock, we have *Gnomon*, the metal sculpture outside Drinko Hall. Although *Gnomon* does relate to time, it was not what Frank had hoped for.

None of this, however, lessens Frank's great accomplishment. It was his ability to draw together faculty, staff, and a first-rate design team, as well as secure the public and private funding needed to launch the project and bring it to completion, that gave us today's Drinko Hall.

Frank understood the symbolism of a building, and one manifestation of this is that Drinko Hall now faces toward campus rather than being turned away from the university. Frank had the foresight to insist on a design that would accommodate at least twenty years of growth in demand for office and program space. This goal was more than met.

The 1992 addition, which transformed Drinko Hall, has held up remarkably well and has given the Moritz College of Law the quality and quantity of space to move successfully into the twenty-first century. This building was Frank's "baby," and he cared for it from the initial design through the selection of furnishings. He gave his heart, and, in no small measure, his health, to this great project. All of us who have worked in Drinko Hall since 1992 as faculty, staff, or students owe Frank Beytagh our gratitude.